



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

To: Royce Hanson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
Mary Bradford, Director, M-NCPPC, Department of Parks

From: Valerie Ervin, ^{VE}Nancy Floreen, ^{NF}George Leventhal, ^{GL}Marc Elrich, ^{ME}and Nancy Navarro, ^{NN}

Date: August 25, 2009

Subject: Request that the Planning Board and Parks Staff Evaluate Short- and Long-Term Options to Preserve Golf at Sligo Creek Golf Course

We are writing to request that you engage in discussions with the Revenue Authority to extend the lease at Sligo Creek Golf Course for 12 months and to work on long-term options for preserving golf at Sligo Creek Golf Course.

Various alternatives have been proposed for the use of the property. At this juncture, it does not seem to us that any alternative is preferable, nor more cost-effective, than the continued availability of golf. We request that Park and Planning staff evaluate – as one possible option for use of the property – how we can maintain golf at Sligo Creek over the short- and long-term without a taxpayer subsidy. If Park and Planning does not evaluate this option among others, there is a chance that the Council will adopt an option that has not had the benefit of Park and Planning's review.

As you know, the County Executive is planning to submit a supplemental appropriation to the Council in September that requires current revenue to maintain golf course operations at Sligo Creek Golf Course. We have concerns about spending taxpayer dollars to subsidize golf; however, possible alternative uses of the site will also require taxpayer dollars. For example, if golf operations do not continue, the Council will be expected to provide a \$56,000 supplemental for short-term interim care of the Sligo Creek Golf Course property. A strong case can be made that this money would be better spent towards keeping the Sligo Creek Golf Course operational.

One long-term solution proposed by Councilmember Ervin is the feasibility of a partnership between the Parks Department and the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs focused on therapeutic golf for veterans at Sligo Creek Golf Course. Councilmember Ervin has discussed this proposal with Deputy Secretary Wilbert Forbes.

He expressed support for this idea and is willing to work with us to find a solution that could benefit the public and veterans.

Another long-term solution could include an evaluation of how the three funding streams (the Revenue Authority golf income, the Park & Planning enterprise fund, and the Recreation Department Agency Fund) can be restructured to keep Sligo Creek Golf Course open with a cross-subsidy from other recreational activities.

As you know, these are not the only options. Since Councilmembers have no expertise in managing golf courses, we encourage you to think creatively on how we can preserve golf at Sligo Creek while minimizing the burden on taxpayers.

Sligo Creek Golf Course serves an important community need and its closure would be detrimental to the County. Despite the County's dire budget constraints, we believe that we cannot be short-sighted about preserving this important resource. We hope that by working together we can come up with options to save the Sligo Creek Golf Course.

cc: Ike Leggett, County Executive
Keith Miller, Executive Director, Montgomery County Revenue Authority
Rachel Newhouse, Department of Parks Planner Coordinator
Shondell Foster, County Council Research Associate
Marlene Michaelson, County Council Senior Legislative Analyst
Mike Welsh, President of North Hills Civic Association
Heather Phipps, Vice President of Neighbors of Northwest Branch
Karen Howland, Woodside Forrest Civic Association
Woody Brosnan, North Woodside Civic Association
Jim Pierobon, Sligo Branview Civic Association
Mark Suffanti, SaveSligoGolf.com
Lillian Louise Hall